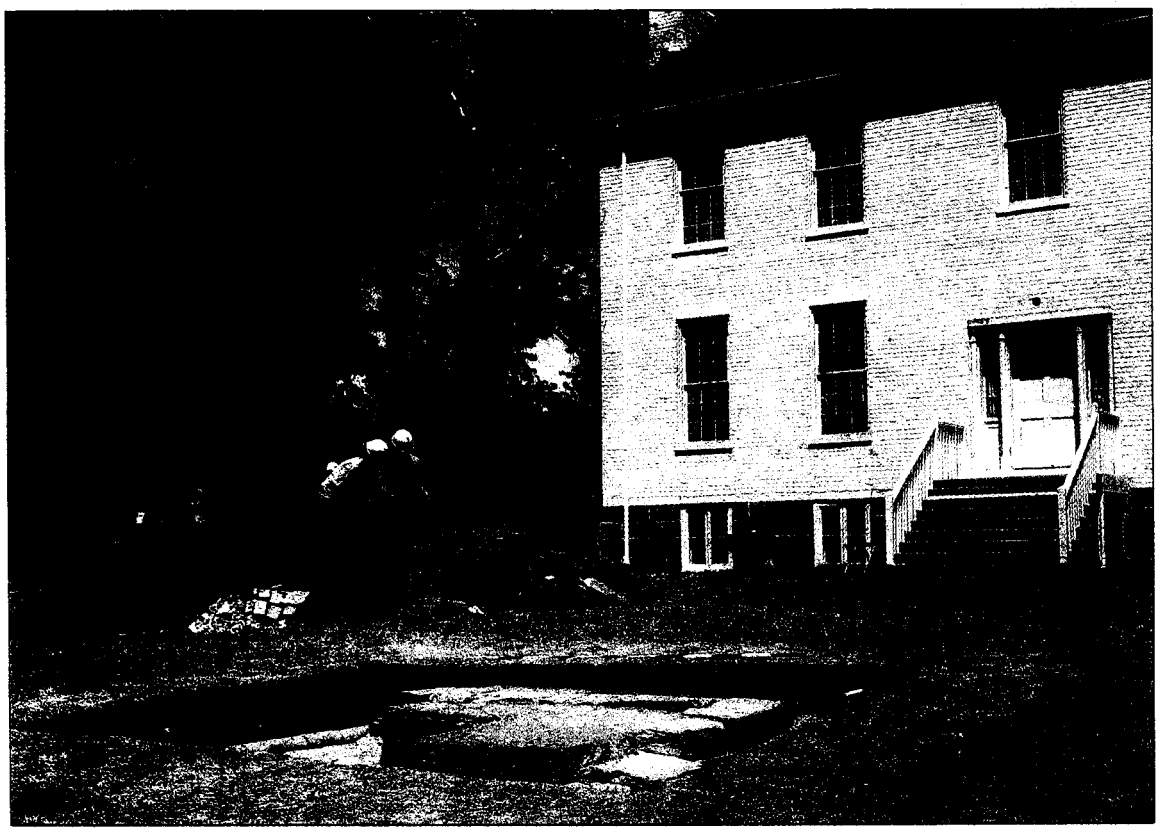

Krista Anderson and Staci Spertzel sift through soil excavated from the grounds of the 1835-vintage Green Bottom home of Albert Gallatin Jenkins, a lawyer, congressman, plantation owner and Confederate general. Among outbuildings unearthed in the dig is the base of a brick-walled, cement-floored privy and the brick sidewalk that connected it to the back door of the mansion.

CHRIS DORST photos
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The general's digs

Excavation of Jenkins mansion grounds unearths history of changes

By Rick Steelhammer
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GREEN BOTTOM — The business of running a large 19th century household often took place under more than one roof, as an archaeological excavation of the grounds surrounding the 1835-vintage home of Confederate Gen. Albert Gallatin Jenkins is demonstrating.

During the past month, archaeologists working under contract to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have been digging through the lawn of Jenkins mansion, discovering foundations for a kitchen, a cement-floored brick privy, and what is believed to have been Jenkins' law office. The archaeologists have also uncovered brick sidewalks, a rainwater cistern, a fenced enclosure they suspect once contained a kitchen garden, and former doorways to the mansion's basement.

"This place has been occupied for a long, long time."

William D. Updike, archaeologist

"We're finding a lot of the particulars that people want when they're planning a reconstruction," said William D. Updike, staff archaeologist for Cultural Resource Analysts Inc. of Teays Valley.

The Corps of Engineers is developing a plan to preserve and restore the Jenkins house and its outbuildings under legislation sponsored by Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va.

The two-story brick mansion itself still stands and has been partially restored. It has been occupied almost constantly from 1835 until the time it was bought by the Corps of Engineers.

"That's why the artifacts we're finding on this dig range from china from the 1830s to plastic pop caps from the 1990s, and percussion caps left behind last year by Civil War re-enactors," Updike said.

The mansion, established by the Civil War general's father, overlooks what was once a 4,000-acre plantation, worked by 80 to 100 slaves, on a fertile stretch of lowland along the Ohio River in northern Cabell County.

Jenkins was a Harvard-educated lawyer who had just begun his second term representing western Virginia in Congress when the Civil War broke out. The militia group he formed was quickly absorbed into the Confederate army, and Jenkins took part in fighting at Scary Creek and other Kanawha Valley skirmishes and raids along the Ohio border before being elevated to the rank of brigadier gen-

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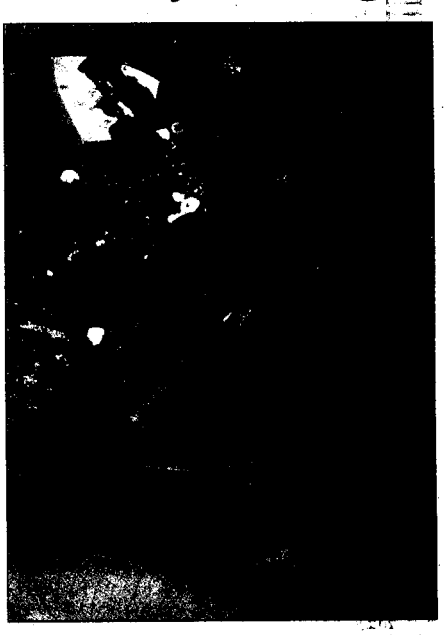

Artifacts uncovered in the dig include glass bottle stoppers, 19th century English pottery, buttons and fragments of Native American pottery.

Archaeologist Jacob Bowman uncovers what was once a doorway leading into the basement of the Jenkins mansion.

CHRIS DORST
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MANSION

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-ral and playing a leadership role in Robert E. Lee's ill-fated Gettysburg campaign.

Wounded at Gettysburg, Jenkins recovered and fought on in the Shenandoah Valley, until he was mortally wounded in the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain.

Much of what was once his family's plantation was bought nearly 25 years ago by the Corps of Engineers to make up for the loss of state wildlife lands that occurred with the construction of the Robert C. Byrd Locks project. The corps leases 836 acres of former plantation land to the state Division of Natural Resources, which operates it as the Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area.

The Jenkins house is subleased to the Division of Culture and History, which opens it to public tours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The mansion was recently designated as a stop on the national Civil War Discovery Trail.

The Division of Culture and History is interested in a full restoration of the Jenkins House, possibly followed by restoration work on at least some of the outbuildings. The Green Bottom Society, a private foundation interested in preserving the mansion and its grounds, would eventually like to see both the mansion and the outbuildings restored.

The Corps of Engineers-sponsored excavation of the mansion's grounds, which ended Wednesday, was performed to determine the location of outbuildings and to try to learn how they were built and what they were used for.

One of the easiest-to-identify outbuildings was a freestanding kitchen off the east end of the Jenkins house. A separate kitchen building was used to avoid stifling heat from cook fires during the summer and to reduce the risk of fire year-round.

A brick sidewalk laid in herringbone pattern uncovered by Updike's six-person crew leads to a huge brick privy with a shallow waste chamber and a cement floor. "That indicates to me that it was designed to be cleaned out regularly," Updike said.

Another unearthed sidewalk ended at a series of postholes demarking what was once a fenced-off area.

"It was built to either keep animals in or out," Updike said. "It seems likely that it may have been a kitchen garden, to keep the kitchen supplied with fresh herbs and produce."

Foundations for a 20-foot-square building unearthed off the west end of the mansion contained no coal cinders or animal bones, and match the general location of a law office building mentioned in oral history accounts of the mansion's heyday.

While Updike's dig is scheduled to end this week, he hopes to return next year for follow-up work.

Archaeologists have not pinpointed the slaves' quarters at the plantation. The remnants of a building near the entrance road to the mansion could prove to have served that purpose. Old photos have also shown the ruins of log cabins in a hillside hollow at the rear of the plantation, which could also have been used to house slaves.

Underneath the 19th, 20th and 21st century artifacts brought to light in the dig are relics left behind by the site's earliest residents — Native Americans.

"We've found several pieces of pottery from the Woodland prehistoric period," Updike said. "This place has been occupied for a long, long time."

To contact staff writer Rick Steelhammer, use e-mail or call 348-5169.